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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ADANA 000017

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL PINS PGOV PHUM TU ADANA

SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR JANUARY 19, 2006

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for January 19, 2006. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

CUMHURIYET / RADIKAL / ZAMAN / HURRIYET / OZGUR GUNDEM / YENI SAFAK: The Hakkari Heavy Penalty Court that held its first hearing yesterday in the case of Sergeant Tanju Cavus, who was accused of killing one person when he allegedly opened fire at a demonstrating crowd following the November 9 Semdinli incident in 2005 (see press summary 01/18), overturned the plea demanding that the case should be linked to the case of the November 9 Semdinli bombing. The court decided to release Cavus while he stood trial. Ozgur Gundem daily brands this court decision as an attempt to cover the alleged "organized crime network" rooted in the state structure.

ZAMAN / CUMHURIYET / RADIKAL: According to Cumhuriyet daily, Selim Akyildiz, Head of the Anti-Terror Branch, provided very little information to the Turkish Parliamentary Commission Probing the Semdinli Case. Akyildiz told the commission that their presence in Semdinli during the November 9 incident was a mere coincidence. Akyildiz had reportedly been in Semdinli between November 8 and 12 as part of a trip to study the situation in various districts including Semdinli, Yuksekova and Hakkari; however, they were stuck in their location in Semdinli following the outbreak of the incident. Radikal daily quoted the statements of the Deputy Head of the National Security Directorate's Intelligence Office to the commission as saying that it would be illogical for a terrorist organization to carry out those bombings in Semdinli and Yuksekova.

YENI SAFAK / RADIKAL / ZAMAN / OZGUR GUNDEM: A two-year-old daughter of a family in Mus's Kiyibasi village reportedly died fifteen days ago and the family now suspects that the girl died because of the rooster the family cooked and ate before the death of their daughter. The family members have been hospitalized in Mus's State Hospital and Diyarbakir's Dicle University Hospital.

OZGUR GUNDEM: The daily reported that many dead birds in Van have not been properly collected by the officials and the local people are improperly putting the carcasses in plastic bags and burying them under snow; a method that would reportedly cause more serious problems.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Co-chairpersons of Democratic Society Party (DTP) made a press announcement together with 56 mayors of the southeastern region in Turkey about confinement of Abdullah Ocalan in a cell in prison for 20 days (see press summary 01/18). DTP made a call to the government and urged it not to further strain the already tense situation in the region. The daily separately noted that attorneys of Ocalan went to the Imrali Island, where Ocalan's solitary prison is located, to meet with their client. However, it is not yet known whether the attorneys were able to see him or not. Meanwhile, a 26-year-old inmate in a prison in Adana, who burned himself to protest the confinement of Ocalan five days ago, received severe burns and was hospitalized.

ZAMAN: The daily reported that confinement of Abdullah Ocalan to his cell ended today.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Higher Election Board announced the names of the political parties which are currently eligible to compete in a national election contest. Reportedly, DTP and a few other parties have still not met the requirements to become qualified as a political party; therefore, DTP would not be able to take part in an election if an election was held today. DTP Deputy Co-Chairperson said that their party was a brand new one, and it would be able to complete all the required processes until fall 2006.

ZAMAN / CUMHURIYET / OZGUR GUNDEM: A large-scale operation has been started by the Turkish military forces against 350 PKK terrorists in Tunceli. The operation is reportedly being supported by air forces as well.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Police and security officers from Riot Police and Jandarma conducted raids on the houses of four DTP members in Siirt. Police reportedly said that these raids came as a result of police suspecting these people.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Human Rights Association (HRA) and Mazlum-Der (Association for Solidarity for Human Rights and Oppressed People) decided to form a joint delegation that would set off before weekend arrives to save Hakan Acil, a police officer who was kidnapped on December 9, 2005 by the PKK/Kongra-Gel members (see press summary 12/09 of 2005).

OZGUR GUNDEM: According to the daily, the European Court of Human Rights' decision to refer cases concerning damages incurred by people due to terror activities and counter-terror measures on grounds that internal judicial mechanisms to resolve such cases have been established in Turkey, have been met with skepticism by NGO's in southeastern Turkey.

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